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Case Study 3: Running Successful Discovery

limehome — Cleaning Calendar (Senior Product Manager)

Context

Cleaning teams across limehome's 100+ properties used an app to see their daily assignments and mark cleanings as done. Guest check-in was fully automatic and depended on API calls from check-in devices, which in turn depended on a cleaning task actually being marked complete.

The Problem

Cleaning tasks were being marked done too late, or not at all. Because check-in was automatic and downstream of that status, this had a direct, waterfall effect on when, or whether, a guest could check into their room. This was a business problem, not just a product one.

The working theory from other teams was that cleaners simply didn't want to use the app since they weren't paid extra for it. Up to that point, the only input the product side had was from cleaning managers describing the app as "complicated," with no further detail.

Discovery

I pushed back on the pay-motivation theory and ran direct interviews with cleaners themselves, rather than continuing to rely on secondhand accounts from their managers. What came back had nothing to do with motivation: the app had been built without ever considering who its actual end users were. Cleaners were working from personal phones with small screens, and in many cases were either non-literate in the local language or completely illiterate. The product had been designed around a heavy localization, text-based approach that was mostly unusable for the people it was meant for.

What I Did

That reframe changed the redesign entirely, from simplifying the existing text to relying heavily on colors and icons instead, removing the dependency on reading fluency altogether. Partway through, engineering found that shipping the winning design required a programming language version upgrade that would have added six months of delay. Since the tool wasn't customer-facing, I made the call to ship the redesign as it was and run the language upgrade in parallel, collecting real usage feedback to confirm the direction rather than waiting six months to find out.

Outcome

100%

Successful rollout

2×

Product adoption

Cleaning tasks stopped being marked late altogether, resolving the original check-in delay problem the project had started from. It also changed how the team approached similar problems afterward: testing an assumption about user behavior directly with users, rather than accepting an explanation secondhand.